

colleagues to try and garner support for this important legislation. This is a good proposal and I encourage all my Senate colleagues to support it.

That said, we must be honest about the facts. The Republican-led war on democracy has only worsened in the last few weeks. Most notably, the Governor of Texas recently signed into law a vile new voter suppression bill that ranks as one of the most draconian and undemocratic in living memory. Meanwhile, partisans across the country are sharpening their knives for a coming spate of vicious gerrymandering, which further threatens to divide our politics.

This is unacceptable. So the Senate must act. I intend to hold a vote in the Senate as early as next week on voting rights legislation. Time—time—is of the essence.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, over the State work period, as Senators attended business back home, the Biden administration's reckless decision to retreat from Afghanistan was carried through to a damaging and deadly end.

The consequences of its hasty retreat were not just foreseeable; they were actually foreseen. And yet, against the advice of Members from both parties and even its own national security experts, the administration plowed right ahead.

Just weeks after abandoning our strategic airbase in the dead of night, the Biden administration told Americans and vulnerable Afghan partners they were largely on their own to make it to the commercial airport in Kabul if they wanted out of Afghanistan.

And by the White House's own admission, some of the Americans who wanted to come home were left behind. So let's let that sink in. President Biden left Americans who wanted to escape behind, in the clutches of the Taliban.

Of course, Americans aren't the only people we left behind. In order to meet an arbitrary political deadline, the Biden administration also pulled out before we helped all the brave Afghans who stuck their necks out to assist American servicemembers and build a better future for their country.

Our Nation made a promise of aid and safety in exchange for their service; and on this President's watch, we actually failed to keep the promise. We left Americans and vulnerable Afghans behind.

The administration naively expected the Taliban to behave like any law-abiding member of the so-called international community, supposedly subject to tremendous leverage for recognition and for funding.

Well, our adversaries are sending emissaries to the Taliban, and the terrorists in Kabul seem unconcerned with diplomacy. Trust in the Taliban to ensure safe passage to the airport for evacuees was fatally misplaced. Anyone who expected the group to become "inclusive" should now rightly expect to literally be laughed out of the room.

The administration confidently insisted it would own the consequences of its withdrawal efforts; but as soon as their lack of planning bore real, deadly consequences, it pointed the blame at everyone but the reflection in the mirror.

Now, in a bizarre twist of narcissism, the White House is now holding up its belated and frantic evacuations as worthy of praise and credit.

So where are we now?

A wall outside the compound that, until recently, housed the U.S. Embassy in Kabul now bears a mural of the Taliban flag. Four terrorists once detained at Guantanamo Bay now hold senior positions in the Taliban regime. And in the void left by our coalition's withdrawal, we are less able to collect intelligence and fight terrorists on their own soil.

This failure was entirely avoidable; the consequences were totally foreseeable; and the stain on our retreat has left America more endangered, less credible, and with fewer capabilities in the face of real and growing terrorist threats.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, the international stage isn't the only area where the Biden administration's policies have caused damage that was both foreseeable and foreseen.

Back in the springtime, Washington Democrats dumped trillions of dollars in liberal borrowing and spending onto the American people. They pretended it was a COVID relief bill. What it was, was a recipe for rampant inflation, a silent tax hike on American families.

It was clear what would happen. Even liberal economists warned this was a bad idea that would cause inflation. But just like in Afghanistan, Democrats had made up their minds long ago and were certainly not going to be deterred.

Now working Americans are paying the price. Annual inflation is up 5.4 percent, tied for the worst inflation in over a decade. It has more than swamped American workers' wage gains over the last year. The Democrats' inflation is turning American workers' pay raises into effective pay cuts, essentially pick-pocketing American families.

You might think this would give our Democratic friends some pause and encourage them to deal in reality; but, alas, that is not what is happening. Instead, they are eager to jam through yet another massive multitrillion-dollar reckless taxing-and-spending spree

in an effort to move our country to the left, literally, forever.

Massive new government intrusion into Americans' childcare arrangements, into Americans' medical prescriptions, into the power grid; new welfare spending that hands out cash with zero—zero—work requirements; socialist price setting that would leave our medical system with fewer new cures; and a thousand more awful, far-left policies just like these, all accompanied by a suite of staggering—literally staggering—tax hikes that would kill jobs, hurt families, and crush our competitiveness with the Chinese.

Details are already emerging about the seismic tax hikes that Democrats are cooking up: more higher taxes on employers and job creators, targeted tax hikes to hit small businesses and family farms, pulling more Americans into the death tax.

This tax-hiking wish list would add up to one of the biggest tax hikes in American history at exactly the time their liberal policies already have our economy sputtering. So it is the very last thing American workers need. It is the last thing American families can afford, and Republicans are going to fight these terrible, painful policies tooth and nail.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James Richard Kvaal, of Massachusetts, to be Under Secretary of Education.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise to speak to 9/11, the 20th anniversary, but before that, I would like to address some of the remarks made by the minority leader just a few moments ago.

He discussed, in the context of the Biden Presidency, what he called a "reckless decision to retreat from Afghanistan with an arbitrary deadline." What the Senator failed to include was the efforts made last year, before Joe Biden was elected President, by the previous President, Republican Donald Trump, through his Secretary of State, Pompeo, in direct negotiation with the Taliban, to establish the deadlines for the evacuation of Afghanistan. The idea didn't come with the new President, Joe Biden; the idea started under